

20 Things to Think About when Choosing Your Surrogacy Relationship

A Surrogacy Journey is huge, beautiful and scary. It can take you from the highest highs to the lowest lows, with every twist, turn, pitfall and obstacle in between. Whether you fall pregnant, whether that pregnancy is heaven or hell, and how or if a baby is born at all, is largely in the hands of nature, fate and your medical specialists. You're not always in control.

Surrogacy is also a massive project, with multiple medical, legal, psychological and financial appointments, policies, processes, professionals and paperwork to deal with. It's busy and time consuming.

And surrogacy goes way beyond the neatly compartmentalised "Your Bun / My Oven" metaphor that is so commonly used. A Surrogate gives birth to a family, by giving birth to a baby. Altruistic surrogacy is relational not transactional. It's connected, not compartmentalised. It's a group of people coming together to bring a special child into the world. If it works, those people will be connected forever through that child.

Altruistic surrogacy, at its core, is a unique, complex and long-term relationship.

Embarking on a surrogacy journey with family members or long-term friends gives you the foundation of a well-established relationship to launch from, where everyone has had decades to come to terms with each other's quirks and foibles. It's still a crazy ride though.

But if the starting point of your surrogacy relationship is simply having the common ground of either needing to find a surrogate or wanting to be a surrogate, then you need to put in substantial time and effort to build a relationship foundation that is strong, deep and resilient enough to withstand the rollercoaster ride of surrogacy.

If surrogacy is a journey - how well do you really know these people you plan to lock yourself in a minivan with for at least the next 12 months? Even the most straightforward surrogacy journey is still a wild ride and maps are hard to come by.

Here are 20 things to think about when choosing your Intended Parents or Surrogate...

1. If you remove the project aspects and appointments as the reason to talk or meet, how often would you catch up with each other and what would you be talking about? That is, if we take everything surrogacy related out of the relationship, what is left?
2. Who initiates contact? Who takes responsibility for making arrangements? Who travels to who? Will it work this way post birth or will it be different?

3. How often do you catch up with your nearest and dearest? Is everyday just enough or once a year a bit too much for you? If you and your surrogacy journey partners agree to “catch up regularly post birth” do your definitions of “regular” align, if surrogacy obligations are no longer your primary reason to meet?
4. Actions speak louder than words: Does what they say correspond with what they do?
5. Have they earned your trust or has your trust simply been given? Would you trust them to look after your kids, pets, or home when you weren't around? Have you ever done this? Would you trust them with your credit card or your unlocked mobile phone?
6. What's their opinion on Trump? Same Sex Marriage? Refugees? Climate change? Do your politics and views align? If not, is that OK?
7. How do they deal with obstacles on the path to achieving their goals? How do they deal with you, if you become an obstacle?
8. How do they respond if you say no? Have you ever tried? Do you feel like you can? Do they respect your right to make choices that are right for you? Your body? Your family?
9. What happens if you refuse their request, or ask for something different, more inconvenient or more expensive than what they are offering?
10. How do they behave when they are tired, hungry, sick, or lacking caffeine? Have they seen you like this?
11. If they don't return a phone call, what does it mean? Are they angry, busy or did they just forget? If you don't return their phone call, what happens? Do they know what it means when you don't return a phone call?
12. How do they treat people other than you? How do they treat people they don't need, or no longer need anything from?
13. Have you spent time in their home? Do they have the same domestic standards as you? Do you tidy the house before they come, or let them see how you really live?
14. How many sugars do they have in their tea or coffee? Do they know how many you have in yours? Who pays for coffee now? Who will pay for coffee post birth?
15. If you invited them to a BBQ with your family and friends, would they fit in? How do you feel around their family and friends? Have you met them?

16. How many times have you met in person? For how long? Or are your communications mainly online or via text? (It takes about 100 hours of in-person contact to actually “know” someone...and being asleep in the same house doesn’t count.)
17. How many times have you met or communicated with their partner? How much interest have they shown in getting to know yours? Do your partners get on?
18. Do your kids and/or your pets like them?
19. Can you tell if they are stressed, overwhelmed, upset or angry? What do they need? Can they tell if you are stressed, overwhelmed, upset or angry? Do you feel comfortable letting them know? Do they know how to support, encourage or comfort you?
20. Is it care or control?
21. Are you receiving as much as you are giving?

Katrina Hale is a Psychologist with over 20 years’ experience. She is passionate about surrogacy and helping people have great surrogacy journeys together. She would love to help you with any aspect of your surrogacy relationship at any time in your surrogacy journey.

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